

● JULY 2026

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**ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING**

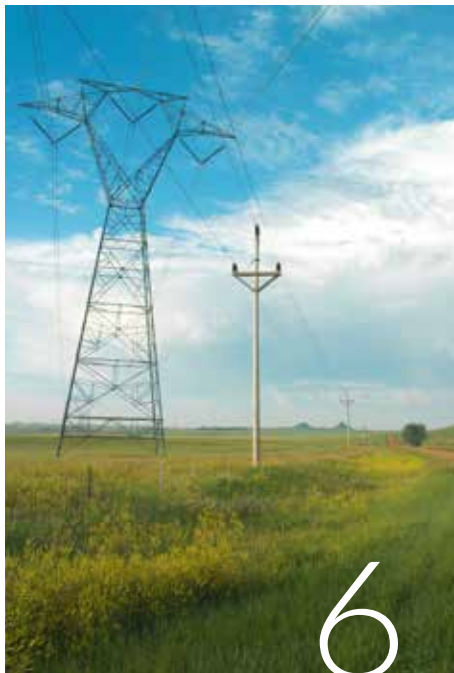
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## ON THE COVER

Special thanks to Lacey Miller, a Clarke Electric Cooperative, Inc. member-consumer, for supplying this month's cover image. Submit high-resolution photos for consideration to [editor@ieclmagazine.com](mailto:editor@ieclmagazine.com). You could receive \$100!

# PROTECTING CO-OP MEMBERS' INTERESTS DURING THE 2026 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

BY HALEY MOON



With new majority leaders in both chambers, new committee leadership and major issues, such as property tax reform and eminent domain, on the agenda, Iowa lawmakers entered the 2026 legislative session facing a full workload. After extending 12 days beyond the scheduled adjournment date, the General Assembly concluded its work with a marathon weekend of negotiations and final votes.

For Iowa's electric cooperatives, energy policy remained a central focus throughout the session. As lawmakers considered a wide range of proposals affecting the energy sector, electric cooperatives worked closely with policymakers to ensure the voices of Iowa's rural communities and member-consumers were part of the conversation. We are always focused on protecting affordable and reliable electric service, and we do so at the Statehouse by supporting various legislative proposals and preventing harmful policies from advancing.

## Key energy issues under consideration

One harmful proposal would have established a third-party solar program in Iowa. While supporters viewed the proposal as a way to expand solar development, electric cooperatives and other stakeholders raised concerns about potential cost shifts to consumers and impacts on grid reliability. Ultimately, the legislation did not advance, helping preserve Iowa's balanced approach to energy policy and protecting consumers from potential increases in electricity costs.

Another priority during the session was legislation aimed at strengthening protections for utility employees.

The proposal would have increased criminal penalties for individuals who assault, threaten or harass public utility workers while they are performing their duties. These employees play a critical role in keeping the lights on and restoring service during emergencies, often working in difficult and hazardous conditions. The bill received broad support in the Senate but ultimately stalled in the House. We remain encouraged by the strong bipartisan recognition of the issue and look forward to continuing efforts to advance these important protections in the future.

## Advocating for co-op members

Lawmakers also considered a large economic development package that included a proposal to require a statewide load forecasting and transmission report. Because utilities already conduct extensive forecasting through existing planning processes, we had concerns about the necessity

and scope of information requests and the cost that could ultimately affect ratepayers. Although the legislation passed, electric cooperatives were actively engaged throughout the process to advocate for practical implementation and to help protect the interests of member-consumers.

As Iowa's political landscape continues to evolve, particularly with the upcoming elections in November, electric cooperatives remain committed to working collaboratively with policymakers, community leaders and industry partners to address the challenges and opportunities ahead. By advocating for sound energy policy and protecting the interests of the communities we serve, we will continue our mission of delivering safe, reliable and affordable electricity while helping Iowa communities thrive for generations to come.

*Haley Moon is the senior manager of policy and advocacy for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.*

## EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

## WIN A BOSE PORTABLE OUTDOOR SPEAKER

Take your favorite music wherever summer adventures lead with the Bose SoundLink Flex Portable Speaker. Delivering rich, high-fidelity sound in a compact, durable design, this Bluetooth speaker is waterproof, dustproof and even floats, making it perfect for the lake, campground or backyard gathering. With up to 12 hours of battery life, it's built to keep the music playing long after the sun goes down.

### Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting [www.ieclmagazine.com](http://www.ieclmagazine.com) no later than July 31. You must be a member of one of Iowa's electric cooperatives to win. There's no obligation associated with entering, we don't share entrant information with anyone and multiple entries from the same account will be disqualified.

The winner of \$100 in beef certificates from the May issue was **Travis Meester**, a **Grundy County REC** member-consumer.



**ENTER ONLINE BY JULY 31!**

# COMMUNITY SOLAR: A SIMPLE WAY TO GO SOLAR

BY JOEL HENELY



Have you ever considered adding solar energy to your home but hesitated because of cost, maintenance or uncertainty

about whether it would be worth the investment? Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative (RVEC) offers an easy alternative with our Community Solar Program.

RVEC recently reopened enrollment in our Community Solar array, and subscriptions are now available at a reduced cost of \$300 per panel. Members who participate receive monthly bill credits based on the energy produced by their subscribed panels, with an estimated return on investment of about five years. It is an affordable way to experience the benefits of solar energy without installing equipment on your property.

## A simple path to solar energy

For many homeowners, a rooftop solar system can require a significant upfront investment. The average residential solar installation can cost tens of thousands of dollars and often has a lengthy payback period. Community Solar eliminates many of those barriers. There are no installation costs, no maintenance responsibilities and no concerns about roof conditions or equipment repairs. RVEC handles everything for you.

Another advantage of Community Solar is its flexibility. Whether you rent your home, have a shaded roof or are not ready to commit to a full solar installation, Community Solar lets you support renewable energy while keeping the process simple and affordable.

## Benefits without the burden

Participants can also track the Community Solar array's performance on RVEC's website. Real-time production data lets members see how much energy the array is generating and better understand how weather, seasons and sunlight affect solar production throughout the year. It is

a valuable educational tool for anyone interested in learning more about renewable energy.

At RVEC, our goal is not simply to offer solar subscriptions; it is to help members make informed energy decisions. We understand that solar energy is not a one-size-fits-all solution, and we are committed to providing honest information about the benefits, limitations and costs of solar power.

If you have been curious about solar energy but aren't sure where to start, Community Solar may be the perfect way to test the waters. You can support local renewable energy, receive bill credits and learn more about solar generation without the expense and maintenance of a rooftop system.

**For more information about Community Solar or to reserve a panel, contact RVEC. We are happy to answer your questions and help you determine whether Community Solar is right for you.**

*Joel Henely is the member services/energy advisor for Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative.*



**Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative**

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#### Summer Hours (Memorial Day - Labor Day)

Monday – Thursday: 7:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Friday: 7:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

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RVEC is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

## JOIN US FOR RVEC'S MEMBER APPRECIATION EVENTS

At Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative (RVEC), you are the reason we do what we do. As a member-owner, your support powers our mission, and we want to thank you!

You're invited to our Member Appreciation evenings. Enjoy a complimentary meal, meet RVEC employees and directors, and connect with fellow co-op members. It's our way of showing appreciation for the community we're proud to serve.

### Sac City

**Wednesday, Sept. 2, 5:00 – 6:30 p.m.**  
601 E Main St, Sac City

### Glidden

**Wednesday, Sept. 16, 5:00 – 6:30 p.m.**  
28725 Hwy 30, Glidden

**Fun, food and friendly faces – you won't want to miss it! Stay tuned for more details in the coming weeks.**

# NOMINATING COMMITTEE APPOINTS DIRECTOR CANDIDATES

The Nominating Committee's responsibility is to select director candidates from each district whose directors' terms are expiring. The following members of Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative were nominated for the office of director for the term specified to be voted on at the business-only Annual Meeting on Sept. 16, 2026:

Twenty or more members may make other nominations in writing, signed by their respective signatures, not less than 45 days before the Annual Meeting on Sept. 16, 2026. The secretary shall post such nominations at the same place where the committee's list of nominations is posted.



**DISTRICT 4**

**David Onken,**  
Incumbent



**DISTRICT 7**

**Karen Werner,**  
Incumbent

## WHY MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

You could be a member of a lot of different places: a gym, a 4-H club, a food-of-the-month club – the list goes on and on! But what makes being a member of a co-op different? The simple answer is that when you are a co-op member, you are also an owner.

You own a stake in our business, and just like any stakeholder, there are many benefits to your membership. As a member-owner of Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative, you have a say in the representatives who are elected to serve on the co-op's board of directors.

You get a say on policy issues your electric cooperative supports or opposes. You can even help to determine how your profits are redistributed.

Our bottom line is providing you with safe, reliable and affordable electricity. While we must think about expenses, overhead and other aspects of daily business, when we have money left over, we send it back to you. And returning capital credits/patronage is a major part of why being a co-op member matters.



**As your local electric co-op, we are part of this community. When we think about membership, we think about all the ways we can give back to you, our member-owners – and that is what matters most to us.**

## SUMMER OFFICE HOURS

Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative (RVEC) has switched to our office summer hours, which run from Memorial Day through Labor Day:

### Monday-Thursday

7:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

### Friday

7:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.



### Need to report an outage or emergency after hours?

- We're always here for you – 24/7! Call us at 712-659-3649 or 800-253-6211. Our after-hours call center will answer and dispatch crews if needed.



### Making a payment after hours? No problem.

**We've got you covered:**

- Use our drop box in Glidden
- Visit our website and click "Pay My Bill"
- Log in to SmartHub online or on the mobile app for quick and easy payments



### Phone payment

- Call 855-939-3612 and follow the prompts



### Have questions?

- Call RVEC at 712-659-3649 or 800-253-6211 – we're here to help!

**Wishing you a safe, sunny, and enjoyable summer!**



# WHAT IS FERC AND WHY DOES IT MATTER TO ELECTRIC CO-OPS?

BY CATHY CASH

FERC has a role in how co-ops can best serve their members by upholding grid reliability and safety, and in keeping costs affordable.

Electric cooperatives were formed to serve members with affordable, reliable and safe power. But what role, if any, does the federal government play in ensuring that happens?

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) is an independent agency in Washington, D.C., with authority over the transmission and wholesale of electricity in interstate commerce.

The commission also regulates the interstate commerce of natural gas and oil and the siting of natural gas and hydropower facilities. Basically, FERC oversees how energy moves across the country by high-voltage power lines or large pipelines.

Definitely big-picture stuff.

## The federal role in the power grid

FERC doesn't regulate your local distribution co-op. But it does exert authority over five generation and transmission co-ops and all the wholesale electricity markets where co-ops buy their power supply. By setting the markets' transmission rates that electric power companies and utilities, including co-ops, must pay, the federal agency can ultimately influence retail prices.

Mary Ann Ralls, senior director, regulatory counsel for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), notes that while state utility commissions have more immediate control over co-op operations and building power lines, the federal agency's influence fills in the gaps.

"State regulation over co-ops is like Swiss cheese – there are many holes where states don't regulate," she said. "FERC's authority is akin to a buffet – a handful of co-ops are subject to the entire scope of regulation, while the vast majority of co-ops must focus on a few items."

The commission's regulations aim at maintaining fair prices within the wholesale electricity markets run by six regional transmission organizations (RTOs) and independent system operators (ISOs). These FERC-regulated RTOs and ISOs manage parts of the national electric grid.

FERC also monitors these markets for energy supply manipulation that can hike prices. When things go wrong,

the commission can investigate and levy penalties.

Overall, FERC sides with conserving energy and encourages utilities to find ways to reduce demand, which eventually can place downward pressure on monthly bills.

The commission largely lacks authority over electric transmission in terms of siting and construction. That falls under state and local authorities.

FERC's authority over building generation is also limited to approving, licensing and inspecting hydropower plants.

Regarding natural gas, FERC has the final say in the construction and operation of liquefied natural gas terminals, pipelines and storage facilities. It reviews gas projects in terms of their impact on the environment, land use, geology and the economy.

And, being a public agency, all FERC's final decisions can be challenged in court.

### Keeping the lights on across America

When it comes to grid reliability, the buck stops with FERC. The commission directs the national grid watchdog – North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC) – and enforces its mandatory reliability rules and requirements on grid operators and owners of the U.S. bulk power system, including utilities and energy producers.

The commission tasked NERC as the electric reliability organization for the continental U.S. after Congress called for a single point of contact following the historic blackout of Aug. 14, 2003, which left more than 50 million people in the Northeast and parts of the Midwest without electricity for periods ranging from several hours to several days.

FERC can require NERC to set new reliability standards or update current rules as needed to protect the grid's ability to serve today's increased demand.

### Who makes the decisions at FERC?

The body is made up of five commissioners appointed by the president and confirmed by the U.S. Senate for five-year terms. The chair presides over open, public meetings on the third Thursday of the month, where the commission votes on orders to act on or approve projects or set precedents. You can even watch these meetings at home from the live link on the FERC website.

While its regulatory influence may not have a hand directly in co-op operations to serve consumers, FERC does have a role in how co-ops can best serve their members by

upholding grid reliability and safety and keeping costs affordable.

"Irrespective of the level of regulation FERC has over a co-op, it is incumbent upon NRECA, working with its members, to impress on the commission that ultimately the co-op's obligation is that the consumer-member at the end of the line has affordable, reliable and safe electric service," said Ralls. "And it is FERC's responsibility through its regulations to support the co-op's achievement of this goal."

*Cathy Cash writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.*



FERC exerts authority over five generation and transmission co-ops and all the wholesale electricity markets where electric co-ops purchase their power supply. Photo Source: Basin Electric Power Cooperative



FERC's authority over building generation is also limited to only approving, licensing and inspecting hydropower plants. Photo Source: NRECA



## HOMEMADE BUTTER PECAN ICE CREAM

- 3 cups pecans  
salt, to taste
- 2 tablespoons butter, plus additional for a drizzle
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 1½ quarts plus up to ¼ cup milk
- 4 eggs
- 2 cans sweetened condensed milk
- ½ pint whipping cream
- 1 tablespoon vanilla  
ice  
ice cream salt

Salt pecans to taste and drizzle with butter. Bake at 350 degrees F for 10 minutes. Melt brown sugar with 2 tablespoons butter. Add a small amount of milk, less than ¼ cup. Set aside to cool. Mix eggs, sweetened condensed milk, whipping cream, 1½ quarts milk and vanilla. Add to the brown sugar mixture, then add pecans. Pour into ice cream maker and use ice cream salt to melt ice. *Serves 20-24*

Natalie Herrington • Nevada  
Consumers Energy

## POPSIE'S ICE CREAM PIE

- 1½ cups graham cracker crumbs
- ¼ cup sugar
- 6 tablespoons butter, melted
- 1 quart vanilla ice cream, softened
- ¼ cup corn syrup
- ¼ cup peanut butter
- ¼ cup salted peanuts

Mix graham cracker crumbs, sugar and melted butter; press into a 9-inch pie pan. Spoon softened ice cream into crust. Mix corn syrup and peanut butter; drizzle on top of ice cream. Sprinkle salted peanuts on top. Freeze at least 2 hours. *Serves 8*

Betsy Jess • Alden  
Franklin Rural Electric Cooperative

## OATMEAL CRÈME PIE DESSERT

- 1 box Little Debbie oatmeal crème pies  
butter
- ½ gallon vanilla ice cream, softened
- 1 8-ounce container whipped topping, thawed
- chocolate syrup
- nuts, optional

Press oatmeal crème pies to cover the bottom of a buttered 9x13-inch pan to make a crust. Mix ice cream and whipped topping. Spread over pie crust and freeze. Cut into squares when ready to serve and top with chocolate syrup and nuts of your choice. *Serves 12*

Mark Martens • Wellman  
T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative

## STRAWBERRY DELIGHT

- 1 sleeve graham crackers, crushed
- 1 cup sugar, divided
- ¼ cup margarine, melted
- 8 ounces cream cheese, softened
- 2 eggs
- ½ teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 3-ounce package strawberry Jell-O
- 1 cup boiling water
- 2 cups unsweetened strawberries, crushed
- 2 cups vanilla ice cream

Mix graham cracker crumbs, ½ cup sugar and margarine. Press into 9x13-inch pan. Beat cream cheese, ½ cup sugar, eggs and vanilla extract together. Pour over crust and bake at 375 degrees F for 15 minutes. Cool thoroughly. Dissolve gelatin in boiling water. Chill until it begins to thicken. Add strawberries and ice cream and stir until smooth. Pour over filling and freeze until firm. You can use fresh or frozen strawberries. Let stand at room temperature 10 minutes before serving. *Serves 12*

Molly Depping • Dike  
Grundy County Rural Electric Cooperative

## CHOCOLATE TOFFEE DESSERT

- 1 cup oatmeal
- ½ cup coconut
- ¼ cup brown sugar
- ¼ cup butter, melted
- ½ cup butter, softened
- 3 tablespoons cocoa
- 2 cups powdered sugar
- 1 egg
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- ½ gallon vanilla ice cream, softened

Mix oatmeal, coconut, brown sugar and melted butter together well. Bake in a shallow pan at 350 degrees F for 10 minutes. Toss lightly with a fork and cool. Put half the mixture in a 9x13-inch pan. In a small bowl, cream softened butter, cocoa and powdered sugar, mixing well. Add egg and vanilla, beat until light colored. In a large bowl, place softened ice cream and stir until smooth. Add chocolate mixture and beat until well blended. Pour ice cream mixture over crumb mixture in pan and top with remaining crumbs. Freeze. Serves 12

Linda Korver • Orange City  
North West Rural Electric Cooperative

## APPLE PIE ICE CREAM

- 16 oatmeal cookies, crushed
- 4 tablespoons butter, melted, divided
- 4 large apples, peeled, cored and sliced
- 2 cups and 6 tablespoons white sugar, divided
- 1 tablespoon and 2 teaspoons ground cinnamon, divided
- 3 cups half and half
- 1 tablespoon vanilla bean paste
- 8 large egg yolks
- 3 cups heavy whipping cream
- caramel ice cream topping, optional

Mix the crushed cookies with 2 tablespoons melted butter and press into a baking sheet. Bake at 375 degrees F for 5 minutes. Remove and cool completely, then crumble. Heat remaining 2 tablespoons melted butter in a skillet over medium heat. Stir in apple slices, 6 tablespoons sugar and 2 teaspoons cinnamon. Cook until apples have lightly browned and the sugar has begun to caramelize, about 10 minutes. Remove from the pan and allow to cool completely. Pour half and half into a saucepan, add 2 cups sugar and the vanilla bean paste, stir to combine. Bring mixture to a simmer over low heat, stirring occasionally. Measure egg yolks into a separate bowl and beat until light yellow in color. Temper egg yolks by very slowly drizzling in about 2 cups of hot half and half mixture into the bowl with the egg yolks while whisking quickly. Then, pour the tempered egg yolk mixture back into the saucepan, whisking gently as you add it back in. Simmer over low heat for 5-7 minutes, until it thickens. The mixture should just barely start to stick to the back of a wooden spoon. Remove from heat, add heavy cream and 1 tablespoon cinnamon. Stir to combine, then cover and refrigerate until cool. Once completely cool, freeze the mixture in ice cream maker according to manufacturer's directions. Stir in cooled oatmeal cookie crumbles and caramelized apple mixture and transfer to a freezer container. You can also add a caramel ice cream topping, if desired. Freeze and enjoy! Yields 1 gallon

Emily McDowell • Paullina  
North West Rural Electric Cooperative

Visit [www.ieclmagazine.com](http://www.ieclmagazine.com) and search our online archive of hundreds of recipes in various categories.



## SALTED CARAMEL SAUCE

- 1 cup sugar
- ½ cup water
- ¼ cup butter
- ½ cup heavy cream
- 1½ teaspoons vanilla
- ¾ teaspoon salt

Heat sugar and water in a saucepan until sugar is dissolved. Add butter and let melt. Bring to boil over medium heat. Do not stir until it's a deep golden color, about 10-15 minutes. Remove from heat and add cream in a slow, steady stream, whisking quickly until well combined. Add vanilla and salt and stir again. Allow to cool. Store in refrigerator for up to two weeks. This sauce is great on ice cream, cheesecake, crepes or for dipping soft pretzels. Yields 1½ cups

Marcy Gherian • Alvord  
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

## STRAWBERRY ICE CREAM

- 2 boxes frozen strawberries, thawed
- 2 cans sweetened condensed milk
- 6 cans strawberry pop

Thaw strawberries and stir together by hand with strawberry pop and sweetened condensed milk. As the pop fizzes, put in an ice cream freezer and freeze in usual manner. Yields 1½ gallons, approximately 48 4-ounce servings or 32 6-ounce servings

Darlene Thomas • Somers  
Calhoun County Electric Cooperative Association

### WANTED:

## TWISTS ON TURKEY

**THE REWARD:**  
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EVERY ONE WE PUBLISH!

**Deadline is July 31**

With Thanksgiving in mind, we're looking for your "twists" on turkey for our November issue. Think beyond the full bird to brines, casseroles, appetizers and your favorite ways to use turkey leftovers. Please include your name, address, telephone number, co-op name, recipe category and number of servings on all submissions.



**EMAIL:** [recipes@ieclmagazine.com](mailto:recipes@ieclmagazine.com)

**MAIL: Recipes**  
Iowa Electric Cooperative Living magazine  
8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 48  
Des Moines, IA 50322



# HOW YOU CAN HELP DURING PEAK DEMAND

BY MIRANDA BOUTELLE

Your electric utility works hard to ensure safe, reliable power is delivered to homes and businesses 24/7. To make sure everyone has the power they need, generation must match consumption and have the capacity to adapt to changing energy demands.

## Why peak demand matters

Peak demand is the period during a day, month or year when electricity use is highest. It's caused by many people using energy-consuming equipment at the same time. It differs based on geography, weather and time of year. For example, demand is typically highest on hot summer afternoons and cold

winter mornings. Most utilities also experience daily peaks when people are getting ready in the mornings and returning home in the evenings.

When everyone uses more energy at the same time, it puts more stress on the electric grid and requires more expensive electricity to meet the need. Electricity pricing is based on supply and demand. Electricity prices are higher when demand is higher, which costs the utility more.

## Shift your use, reduce the strain

To reduce energy use and strain on the grid during peak times, we can adopt habits in our homes.

Let's look at two examples.

Joe and John arrive home from work at 5:30 p.m. They both turn on the oven to make dinner.

While John waits for the oven to preheat, he throws in a load of laundry. He finishes dinner, cleans up and starts the dishwasher. Then, he moves the clothes to the dryer.

Joe finishes dinner, loads the dishwasher and sets it to start at 10 p.m. He puts a load of laundry in the washing machine and later that evening switches it over to the dryer.

Although they use the same appliances and amount of energy, John uses it all at once, running multiple appliances during peak

hours, creating higher demand and more strain on the electric grid while using more expensive energy.

To lower your demand, spread electricity use throughout the day and avoid peak times whenever possible. This will reduce the utility's cost of supplying electricity to your home. Another benefit of shifting your use to midday is the integration of renewable energy, such as solar, which produces power when the sun is shining.

Large appliances, including washers, dryers, ovens, water heaters and air conditioners, have the biggest

impact. Using them during off-peak hours or one at a time can help.

### Let technology do the work

Automate as much as possible. Most electric vehicle chargers can be set to charge during scheduled hours with built-in timers or apps. Most modern dishwashers have delay-start features. If you have a pool, set the pool pump to run in the middle of the day, especially if you live in a region with high solar output.

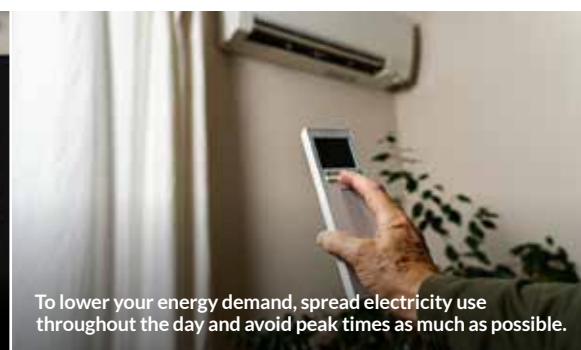
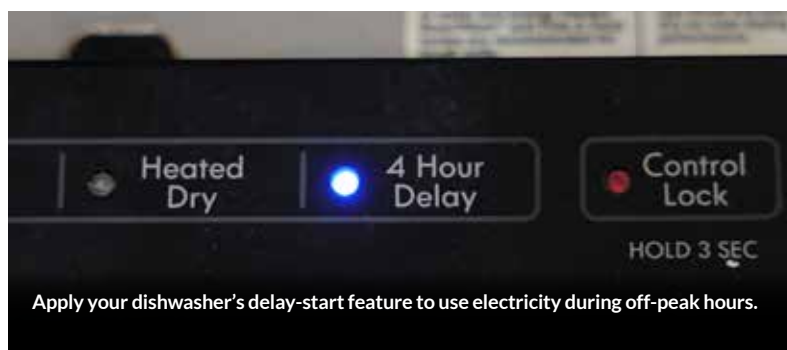
You can also automate air conditioning. Some utilities offer programs that pre-cool homes during off-peak hours to reduce

demand during peak times. Simple, free adjustments, such as closing your curtains on hot afternoons and evenings, can help, too.

Keep in mind that extreme weather, whether freezing temperatures or a heat wave, puts extra stress on the grid. Conserving energy during extreme weather events can help prevent outages.

Spreading out your energy use helps your utility keep costs down and benefits your local energy grid.

*Miranda Boutelle writes on energy efficiency topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.*



## 7 WAYS IOWANS CAN SAVE ENERGY THIS SUMMER

Summer is in full swing across Iowa, and so is the season of higher energy use. Air conditioners work harder during hot, humid weather, but a few simple steps can help keep your home comfortable while managing energy costs. Try these energy-saving tips for the remainder of the summer season.



### 1. Block the sun's heat.

Keep blinds, shades or curtains closed during the hottest parts of the day, especially on south- and west-facing windows. This can help reduce heat gain and lessen the workload on your air conditioner.



### 2. Adjust your thermostat.

Set your thermostat at the highest comfortable temperature when you're home and raise it a few degrees when you're away. A programmable or smart thermostat can make these adjustments automatically.



### 3. Use ceiling fans wisely.

Ceiling fans can help you feel cooler, allowing you to rely less on air conditioning. Use ceiling fans in a counter-clockwise rotation in the summer. Be sure to turn fans off when you leave a room since they cool people, not the room itself.



### 4. Maintain your cooling system.

A clean, well-maintained air conditioner operates more efficiently. Check or replace air filters regularly and make sure vents and registers are not blocked by furniture, rugs or curtains.



### 5. Seal leaks and keep cool air inside.

Small gaps around windows and doors can allow cooled air to escape and hot air to enter. Adding weatherstripping or caulk can improve comfort and reduce energy waste.



### 6. Limit heat-producing activities.

Appliances and lighting generate heat that can make your air conditioner work harder. Use LED light bulbs and consider grilling outdoors or using smaller appliances instead of turning on the oven during the hottest parts of the day.



### 7. Save on water-heating costs.

Water heating is one of the largest energy expenses in many homes. Setting your water heater to 120 degrees F can reduce energy use while still providing plenty of hot water for most households.

Even small changes can make a difference. By adopting a few energy-saving habits this summer, you can stay comfortable and help keep energy costs under control.

## BEWARE OF PHANTOM LOADS IN YOUR HOME

You may turn off the TV and power down your computer, but these appliances – and many others – continue to draw electricity, costing you money.

Energy use is multiplied in any appliance with a lit display clock, memory chip or remote control. These include TVs, cable and satellite boxes, microwaves, water coolers, video game players, burglar alarms and more.

According to the Department of Energy, 40% of all electricity used to power home appliances is consumed when the devices are turned off. It's also estimated that these energy "vampires" use 5% of our total electricity and cost U.S. consumers more than \$3 billion annually, according to the Alliance to Save Energy.

### So, what can you do to save money?

Look for the ENERGY STAR® label on all appliances that you purchase. These appliances may use as much as 50% less energy than other appliances.

Purchase appliances – such as computers and monitors – that will go to sleep (also called power management or stand-by mode) when not in use.

Any time you purchase an appliance (such as a microwave) with a continually lighted display or clock, you will pay for the constant-on feature. If you can live without these features, your energy costs will decrease.

**If you keep items in your entertainment center powered through power strips, you can turn off – and back on – all the equipment at once.**

## WHAT ARE THOSE BIG GREEN BOXES?

You've likely seen the large green boxes in yards or near properties throughout Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative's (RVEC) service area. While they may not stand out for their appearance, these pieces of equipment play a vital role in safely delivering electricity to your home, business or farm.

These boxes are called **padmount transformers**. They are part of our underground electrical system and reduce high-voltage electricity from power lines to a safe, usable level before it reaches your service location. By placing lines underground, these transformers help reduce the risk of outages caused by storms, trees and other outside hazards.

### Safety is key

Although they may look harmless, padmount transformers are highly energized and can be extremely dangerous if tampered with. For your safety, always keep at least 10 feet of clear space around the transformer. If damaged, the equipment could energize the surrounding ground, creating a serious hazard.

As you work outdoors, keep these tips in mind:

- **Call 811 before you dig.** This free service will have underground utility lines marked before you begin. Iowa law requires calling 811 prior to digging.
- **Keep vegetation trimmed back.** Avoid planting trees, shrubs or landscaping within 10 feet of the transformer.
- **Maintain clear access.** Keeping the area open allows crews to safely perform maintenance and restore power quickly if needed.
- **Report any issues.** If you notice a transformer that appears damaged, open or tampered with, contact RVEC right away.
- **Remind children to stay away.** Never allow kids to sit on, open, or play near these boxes.

Padmount transformers may not be the most attractive part of your landscape, but they are essential to providing safe and reliable electric service.



**If you ever have questions or need to report a concern, call RVEC at 712-659-3649 or 800-253-6211, or email [info@rvec.coop](mailto:info@rvec.coop).**

# SMALL CHANGES, SMART SAVINGS: SIMPLE WAYS TO USE ENERGY WISELY

As energy consumers, we all play a role in conserving resources, staying comfortable and managing energy costs. One of the best ways to get started is by tracking your energy use through SmartHub. By logging in or registering your account, you can view your electric usage, monitor trends and better understand how your home uses energy. The good news? Improving energy efficiency doesn't have to be complicated or expensive. A few simple changes around your home can make a difference year-round.



## Know your energy use

A great place to start is understanding how much energy you typically use. Review your electric bills from the past 12 to 24 months to find your average monthly usage. This gives you a baseline, making it easier to see the impact of any energy-saving steps you take. SmartHub also allows you to track daily and monthly usage patterns, helping you identify opportunities to save energy and money.



## No-cost ways to save energy

Small habits can lead to noticeable savings over time:

- Turn off lights and unplug electronics and chargers when they're not in use
- Close or adjust window coverings to help regulate indoor temperatures
- Change HVAC air filters regularly according to manufacturer recommendations
- Use ceiling fans wisely:  
**Summer:** Counterclockwise to create a cooling breeze  
**Winter:** Clockwise at a low speed to push warm air down
- Grill outdoors during summer months to keep extra heat out of the kitchen



## Seal the leaks

Proper insulation and weatherproofing help keep your home comfortable while reducing energy waste:

- Check for air leaks around windows and doors
- Seal gaps with caulk or weatherstripping to reduce drafts
- Keep exterior doors closed to prevent heated or cooled air from escaping



## Make the most of your thermostat

- Many homes don't fully use the features of a programmable or smart thermostat.
- Set temperatures to automatically adjust while you're asleep or away
  - Consider upgrading to a smart thermostat for added control and convenience
  - Even adjusting the thermostat just a few degrees can lead to meaningful energy savings

By taking these simple steps, you can reduce your energy costs while conserving resources –benefiting both your household and the cooperative community we all share.

## CEILING FANS: A SIMPLE WAY TO SAVE ENERGY YEAR-ROUND

When used correctly, ceiling fans can boost comfort and reduce energy costs. With proper installation and smart operation, they can support your heating and cooling systems no matter the season.

### Summer savings

In warmer months, set your ceiling fan to spin counterclockwise. This creates a wind-chill effect that makes you feel cooler, allowing you to raise your thermostat by about 4 degrees F without sacrificing comfort. Just remember, fans cool people, not rooms – so turn them off when you leave.

### Winter efficiency

During colder months, reverse the fan's direction clockwise and run it at a low speed. This gently pushes warm air trapped near the ceiling back into the living space, helping you feel warmer and potentially allowing you to lower the thermostat a few degrees.

### Use with care

A Florida Solar Energy Center study found that ceiling fans can increase summer energy use by up to 15% if homeowners don't adjust their thermostats. However, when used correctly, energy savings ranged from 10% to 65%, especially in milder climates.

## SMART TIPS FOR FAN USE

- 1 Think like a light switch:** Turn fans off when the room is empty.
- 2 Adjust the thermostat:** Raise it by 4 degrees when fans run in summer.
- 3 Install thoughtfully:** Choose rooms where fans will be used and where airflow can make a difference.
- 4 Buy energy-smart:** Look for ENERGY STAR®-certified ceiling fans. These models move air up to 20% more efficiently than standard fans.
- 5 Ceiling fans aren't just for comfort – they can be part of your energy-saving strategy.** Small changes can lead to big savings, especially with energy-conscious habits.

# SEE IOWA'S BEST LINEWORKERS IN ACTION AT THE STATE FAIR

If you've ever wondered what it takes to keep the lights on, the second annual Iowa Electric Utilities Lineman Rodeo offers a front-row seat to one of the most skilled and essential professions in the utility industry.

The rodeo will take place Friday, Aug. 21, at Elwell Family Park on the Iowa State Fairgrounds. The event begins at 8 a.m., with gates opening at 7 a.m. Admission is free with paid fair admission.

Organized by the Iowa Utility Association and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, the rodeo is supported by MidAmerican Energy, Alliant Energy, ITC and Prairie Energy Cooperative. The competition showcases the precision, expertise and commitment to safety required of lineworkers who build and maintain the electric grid.

## Putting skills to the test

Journeyman and apprentice teams will compete in four challenging

events designed to test the skills they use every day in the field. Competitions include pole climbing, cutout changes and simulated rescue scenarios. Contestants will be judged on safety, accuracy and efficiency as they complete each task.

Several Iowa electric cooperatives will be represented, including Prairie Energy Cooperative, T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative and Eastern Iowa Light & Power Cooperative. The event provides an opportunity for cooperative lineworkers to demonstrate their expertise while connecting with fairgoers from across the state.

Scott Meinecke, director of safety and loss control for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives, and Don Kelchen of ITC will serve as event emcees.

## More than a competition

In addition to the rodeo events, visitors can explore vendor and utility



exhibits throughout the day. Electric utilities, sponsors and industry partners will host tent spaces where attendees can learn more about careers in the utility industry, pick up promotional items and visit with lineworkers and other professionals.

Students and young people interested in a career in linework are especially encouraged to attend. Lineworkers will be available to answer questions about training, apprenticeships and career opportunities in this high-demand field.

Whether you're interested in utility careers or simply want to see some of Iowa's best lineworkers in action, the rodeo offers an entertaining and educational experience for the whole family.

# WANTED: RURAL IOWA PHOTOS

We're always looking for stunning images for the cover of *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine. If we select your photo for a cover, we'll award you \$100.

## RECEIVE \$100 FOR A PUBLISHED PHOTO

### How to enter:

- 1 Snap a photo capturing rural Iowa (image must be high quality, at least 1MB large; if taken on a phone, send us the largest version – bigger is better!).
- 2 Send us the original, high-resolution image file in an email to [editor@ieclmagazine.com](mailto:editor@ieclmagazine.com) with "Cover Submission" in the subject line.
- 3 Include your **name**, **service address** and the **name of your electric cooperative** in the email body to ensure you qualify for our contest. A **phone number** is also appreciated in case we need to contact you.

All eligible entries are reviewed and considered for each edition of *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living*. Keep an eye out for next month's winner!



# FOUNDING FARMER: HOW GEORGE WASHINGTON SHAPED AMERICA AND AGRICULTURE

BY DARCY DOUGHERTY MAULSBY

Photo Source:  
Library of Congress

As our nation celebrates 250 years, few figures embody the promise and hope of America more than George Washington. I've always appreciated how he considered himself a farmer first and a statesman second.

I shared some stories about Washington when I was invited to give Memorial Day speeches at two local cemeteries this year. I wasn't sure if people would find this history as interesting as I do. Turns out the answer is yes!

Washington viewed agriculture as the backbone of a successful nation. While he proclaimed he'd "rather be on my farm than be emperor of the world," he was away from home for nearly nine years during the American Revolution. Then, he was gone again for another eight years (1789-1797) to serve as America's first president.

He always harbored a deep desire, though, to return to his beloved Mount Vernon. There, he could study and implement farming innovations and devote his life to the improvement of American agriculture. "Agriculture is the most healthful, most useful, and most noble employment of man," Washington stated.

## **"Freedom and property rights are inseparable"**

Washington's rural roots ran deep. He was born on a Virginia plantation in 1732. By the time he was 17, he pursued a lucrative career as a surveyor. He surveyed tens of thousands of acres during the next 50 years, from Virginia's western frontier to Mount Vernon itself.

Washington understood the importance of private property and its unique place in American society. "Freedom and property rights are inseparable," Washington wrote. "You can't have one without the other."



His favorite property was Mount Vernon, which came into the Washington family in 1674. He inherited the estate in 1761. The land was divided into five farms that encompassed nearly 8,000 acres of land during Washington's lifetime.

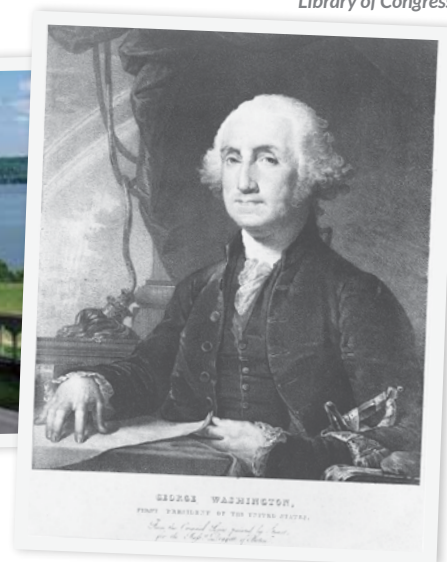
Washington was an exceptional farm manager. Mount Vernon included a diverse array of enterprises, from a grist mill to a whiskey distillery. It's interesting to note that whiskey-making was far and away Washington's most profitable ag business. By 1799, the year he passed away, his distillery was one of the largest in America.

He also had the mind of an accountant. He was a stickler for detailed records. "I shall begrudge no reasonable expense that will contribute to the improvement and neatness of my farms – for nothing pleases me better than to see them in good order, and everything trim, handsome and thriving about them," Washington wrote.

## **Crop rotations to composting**

For decades, tobacco was the main cash crop at Mount Vernon. By the 1760s, however, Washington knew this labor-intensive crop was an unsustainable option, due to the way tobacco plants depleted the soil and hastened erosion.

As he studied alternatives, Washington focused on crop rotations and soil



regeneration – two things that are near and dear to my heart. He implemented a seven-year crop rotation of wheat, grains, pasture and other crops on Mount Vernon's farms.

Washington also focused on finding a fertilizer that would invigorate the lackluster soils at Mount Vernon. Nothing seemed to work as well as a mixture of manure and plant material that he allowed to "brew" together in a simple structure strategically located next to his stables.

Constructed around 1787, this was likely the first building in America devoted to composting.

Washington's switch from ineffective, old farming practices to new solutions was emblematic of America's pivot away from an eroding relationship with England. It's also symbolic of freedom and progress – things that continue to define the American spirit.

To Washington, America's success relied on advanced agricultural science, the sustainable harvest of the land's natural resources and a strong rural foundation. These are all worth celebrating as we honor America 250.

*Darcy Dougherty Maulsby lives near her family's Century Farm northwest of Lake City. Visit her at [www.darcymaulsby.com](http://www.darcymaulsby.com).*



IOWA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

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